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**PATENT APPLICATION**  
**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

#2/a

Applicants : Guy AZAM et al. )  
 ) Group A.U. 3728  
Appln. No. : Unassigned (PCT National ) (Anticipated)  
Phase of PCT/FR00/03661) )  
 ) Examiner Not Yet Assigned  
I.A. Filed : December 22, 2000 )  
 )  
For : TIGHT SHOE LACE-UP DEVICE )

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks  
Washington, D.C. 20231

Sir:

Prior to the calculation of filing fees and prior to the first examination of the instant application, please enter the following amendment, which deletes multiple dependent claim relationships:

**In the Claims:**

Please cancel claims 1-10 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add new claims 11-20 as follows:

-- 11. A lace-up device adapted to equip footwear, the footwear including two portions to be brought closer together with said device, said device comprising:  
a tightening zone comprising return elements positioned on said portions;

a linkage including two ends, said linkage connecting, along a predetermined direction of travel, at least two return elements arranged on different respective ones of said footwear portions, said linkage forming a loop outside said tightening zone;

a means for locking said linkage;

a gripping device arranged on said linkage in an area of said loop, said gripping device enabling a user to pull efficiently on said linkage with at least one hand.

12. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said gripping device comprises a rigid frame for distributing tension of said linkage over a hand of the user.

13. A lace-up device according to claim 12, wherein said frame comprises a contact surface complementary of at least three fingers of the hand of the user.

14. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said gripping device includes a hooking means adapted to cooperate with said two ends of said linkage and thus closing said loop.

15. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said locking means is integrated into said return elements positioned at a junction of said tightening zone and said loop, for maintaining tension in said tightening zone.

16. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said tightening zone comprises at least two zones separated by at least one return element positioned on each of said portions of said footwear, and wherein said locking means is integrated into said return elements for maintaining said tightening tension in a lower one of said two zones of said tightening zone, said lower zone being separated from said gripping device by said return elements.

17. A lace-up device according to claim 16, wherein said return elements, located in said lower tightening zone, include guiding means adapted to prevent said linkage from escaping during loosening.

18. A lace-up device according to claim 16, wherein said return elements, located in an upper one of said two zones of said tightening zone, are of a hook type for manually positioning said linkage in said return elements.

19. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said linkage is flexible and substantially non-stretchable.

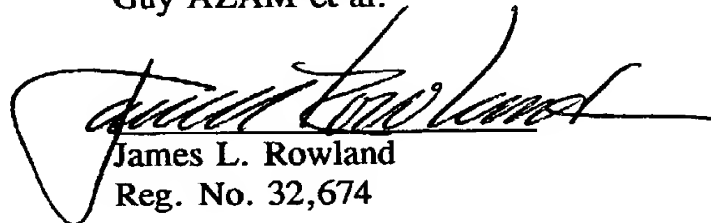
20. A lace-up device according to claim 11, wherein said locking means is integrated into a locking element of said locking means that is slidably mounted on said loop.

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REMARKS

After entry of the amendment above, examination of the instant U.S. national phase application is requested. If there are any comments or questions concerning this preliminary amendment or this application, they can be directed to Applicant's undersigned attorney at telephone number (703) 716-1191.

Respectfully submitted,  
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